

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR CEV HEARING
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I want to welcome everyone to today's important hearing, this Committee's first public discussion of the Crew Exploration Vehicle, or Orion, project since we had the Administrator before us in March, and the first review in Congress since Lockheed Martin was awarded the contract for Orion at the end of August.

Let me start by reiterating my support for the President's Vision for Space Exploration, which I think is an important national undertaking. And let me also reiterate my determination that NASA not become a single-mission agency; human space flight can't succeed at the expense of earth science, space science and aeronautics.

So NASA has to move ahead with Orion deliberately, but also cautiously, and Congress has to keep a keen and constant eye on the project. Neither the agency nor the nation can afford another Space Station – a project that, for all its technical magnificence, has seen its costs balloon while its capabilities shrank to near the vanishing point.

This may very well be my last hearing on NASA, but I hope we will have set a pattern of friendly, but rigorous vigilance that will be continued as the nation moves ahead with work on returning to the moon.

I am pleased to say that NASA itself also seems to be operating at a high level of vigilance. The agency is trying to base Orion on technologies that have already been used successfully in other programs. And I am very glad to see that NASA modified the Lockheed Martin contract for Orion as a result of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study this Committee requested.

That is a great example of how sensible oversight can work to the advantage of the agency being reviewed, and frankly it's a credit to this Committee, to GAO and to NASA that the contract was modified.

But that hardly closes the issues before us. GAO correctly points out that NASA does not yet have a final design or cost estimate for Orion. That's not a criticism of NASA; that's just where we are in the process, and Congress has to recognize how fluid the situation is – although far less fluid than at this time last year.

GAO believes that NASA should not have let as extensive a contract as it did, given the uncertainties, and they make a plausible case. NASA has made reasonable arguments in response, and the contract has been let, so we don't have to rehash that issue here.

What we do have to learn at this hearing is: what should Congress be doing and what information we should be seeking to exercise strict oversight as this project moves forward? And, what additional steps should NASA be taking to make sure that project costs do not escalate?

I look forward to getting answers to those key questions. We have the right folks before us to get those answers, and I want to welcome Dr. Scott (Doc) Horowitz from NASA for his first public appearance before the Committee. He meets with the staff all the time, and hopefully we won't be as hard on him today as they are.

Mr. Gordon.